

# D. Boon



D. Boon and his Telecaster Custom onstage at Swisher Gym, Jacksonville University, November 23, 1985. The Minutemen were touring in support of R.E.M. Boon died one month later in a van accident. Margaret Griffis ([margaretgriffis.com](http://margaretgriffis.com))

The Telecaster perhaps most associated with Boon is this Custom purchased in Nashville. Watt recalls that Boon swapped in the Charvel neck when he became frustrated with the chipping finish on its original maple unit (see performance photograph), thus the serial number for the guitar is long gone. Boon installed the Kahler machine bridge because he liked the bridge in his Black and Gold. This guitar was in the van at the time of Boon's fatal accident. The first time Watt actually removed it from the case was to make this photograph. *Courtesy Watt*

**F**ormed in San Pedro, California, in 1980, the Minutemen were one of the more original bands on the West Coast punk scene. Hardcore in attitude, they nevertheless eschewed the usual hardcore power-chord grind for a style that was equally fast, yet bouncy and wiry, more rhythmic than noise-driven. While each member of the trio offered a distinctive musical take on his role in the band—from Mike Watt's busy, lolling bass lines to George Hurley's incessant, pounding drums—D. Boon's playing arguably stood out most of all. Simultaneously funky and frenetic, sounding remotely like Steve Cropper sitting in with Iggy Pop after downing one too many triple espressos, his guitar work offered a unique and compelling accompaniment to quirky American tales sketched out within the Minutemen's songs.

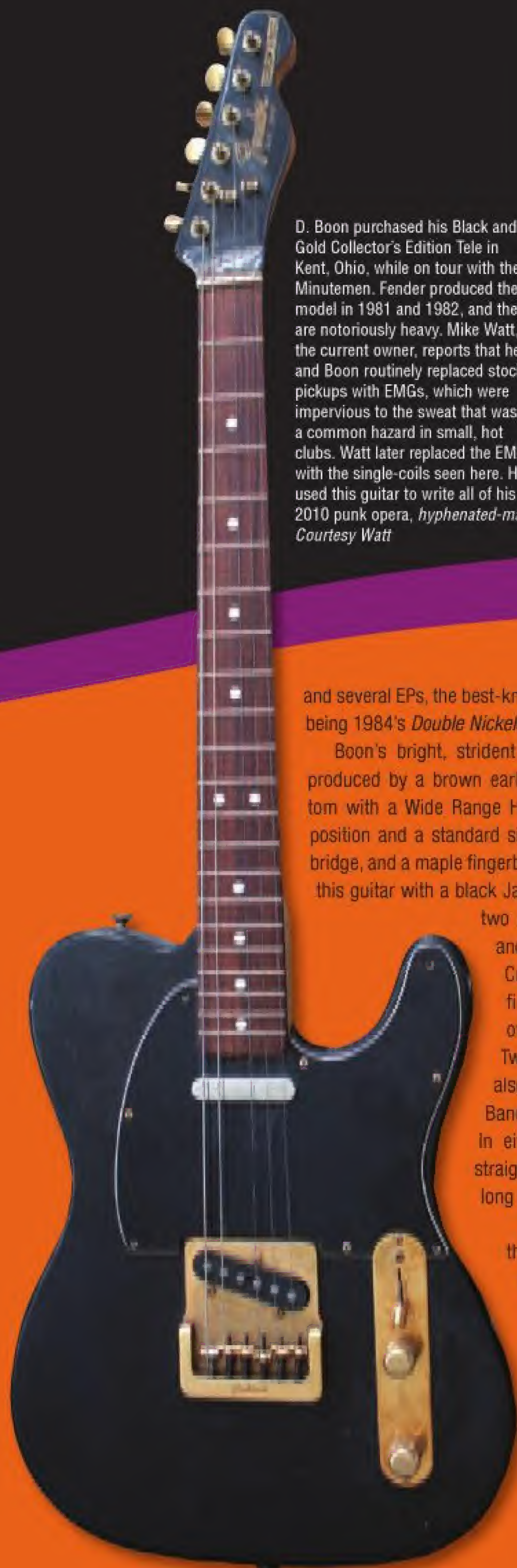
D. was born Dennes Boon in 1958 to an ex-Navy father and a family that lived in a former World War II barracks on the outskirts of San Pedro that had been converted to public housing. He met his best-friend-to-be and future band mate Watt when he jumped on him from a tree during a game of Army when the pair were thirteen years of age. Together with Hurley, they formed the band the Reactionaries in 1978, which segued into the Minutemen in 1980. The band's first glimpse of the "big time," or whatever might constitute the big time in the world of the Minutemen, came with an opening slot for Black Flag later in 1980, followed by a seven-inch vinyl EP, *Paranoid Time*, produced by Black Flag leader Greg Ginn, who was also the head of punk stable SST Records. Over the next five years, the Minutemen undertook a grueling tour schedule and recorded four studio albums



FENDER TELECASTER

• 210 •





D. Boon purchased his Black and Gold Collector's Edition Tele in Kent, Ohio, while on tour with the Minutemen. Fender produced the model in 1981 and 1982, and they are notoriously heavy. Mike Watt, the current owner, reports that he and Boon routinely replaced stock pickups with EMGs, which were impervious to the sweat that was a common hazard in small, hot clubs. Watt later replaced the EMGs with the single-coils seen here. He used this guitar to write all of his 2010 punk opera, *hyphenated-man*.  
*Courtesy Watt*

and several EPs, the best-known of the long-players being 1984's *Double Nickels On The Dime*.

Boon's bright, strident tone was most often produced by a brown early '70s Telecaster Custom with a Wide Range Humbucker in the neck position and a standard single-coil pickup in the bridge, and a maple fingerboard. He supplemented this guitar with a black Japanese Telecaster with two single coils, and later, another brown '70s Tele Custom with rosewood fingerboard. His amp of choice was a Fender Twin Reverb, though he also occasionally used a Bandmaster head and cab. In either case, he plugged straight in using a single, long cable.

The Minutemen played their final show in Charlotte, North Carolina, on December 13, 1985. On December 22, during a road trip to Arizona, Boon was sleeping off a fever in the back of

the van when his girlfriend fell asleep behind the wheel and veered off I-10 into a roadside ditch. He was thrown from the van, suffered a broken neck, and died instantly. Mike Watt—who formed the band Firehose in 1986 with Hurley and Minuteman fan Ed Crawford—has owned Boon's iconic Telecaster Custom ever since his friend's death. The guitar was used by Nels Cline (now of Wilco) on the song "The Boilerman" on Watt's 1997 solo album *Contemplating The Engine Room*, and has been played by Watt himself on recent studio projects. In 2005, Rocket Fuel Films released the documentary *We Jam Econo—The Story of the Minutemen*, which features original live performance footage as well as more than fifty newly shot interviews with players on the early '80s hardcore scene.

